

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
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INFORMATION REPORT

REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

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COUNTRY Anglo-Egyptian Sudan

DATE DISTR. 28 May 1948

SUBJECT Egyptian Influence in the
Sudan Railroad Strike, [REDACTED]

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1. From the beginning of the Sudan Railroad strike, the Sudan Graduates' General Congress took an active interest in the fortunes of the Workers' Affairs Association. The official contribution of the Congress to the cause of the striking workers was limited to a donation of 100 pounds. Behind the scenes, however, the Congress was engaged in more important activities.
2. When, on 24 March, the Sudan Central Committee for Aiding Palestine met to consider the appeal of Hajj Amin Husayni for funds, searching questions by one member of the Committee led to a scrutiny of the accounting of the collections made on behalf of Palestine. Ummah Party representatives accused the Committee of having diverted funds received for this purpose to the treasury of the Graduates Congress for channelling to the Workers' Affairs Association. This leak was estimated to have cost the Committee about 4,000 pounds. When the leak was plugged, the Ashiqqah Party, through the Congress, sent instructions to Ismail Ashari in Cairo to organize help for the Sudan Railroad strikers.
3. Ismail Ashari met Salih Harb, President of the Shubban al-Muslimin, in Cairo and discussed with him ways and means for assisting the Sudanese strikers. Among methods suggested was a proposal that every Egyptian worker should contribute a day's wages to fellow workers in the Sudan. Salih Harb, whose prestige has remained high in Egyptian nationalist circles, carried this appeal to old-line extreme Egyptian nationalists, impressing upon them the need to embarrass the British Administration in the Sudan. It is understood that Ali Mahir's Gihat Miar Organisation was instrumental in securing this financial assistance for the Sudanese strikers. The Graduates Congress in Khartoum communicated the favorable results of Ashari's efforts in Cairo and the Workers' Affairs Association early in April reaffirmed the strike with renewed vigor. This led to the arrest of Mustafa Musa, its President.
4. Although direct donations continued to assist the WAA in pursuing the strike, the powerful backing of the strikers came as a surprise to the Sudan Government which had been anticipating a speedy settlement. The office of Sabri Kurdi's Egyptian Irrigation Department in Khartoum gradually made available to the WAA through the Graduates Congress funds amounting to about 10,000 pounds for the purpose of prolonging the strike. Meanwhile, through pressure of the Ummah Party, the leak of funds from the treasury of the Sudan Central Committee for Aiding Palestine was made the subject of renewed arguments. Haxid Bey Salih, the so-called Commandant of the Sudan Voluntary Forces for Palestine, who had

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been conferring in Cairo, returned to Khartoum and demanded that the Congress make good the discrepancies.

5. The theory has been advanced that Ashari obtained funds from the Russian Legation in Cairo, and that he transferred them to the Workers' Affairs Association through the office of Sabri Kurdi's Egyptian Irrigation Department, and the Sudan Graduates Congress. Ashari's opportunist inclinations have for the past two or three years been recorded. It is known that he has in turn obtained funds from the British and from the various Egyptian political parties. When in 1946 he finally approached the Soviet Legation in Cairo, the Russians mistrusted him to the extent of denying him any monetary contributions. Thereupon, the relations with the Russians had been strained although he remained a target for clever exploitation by the Soviet agents, falling under their influence now and then.
6. The WAA was enabled to wage the most successful strike in the history of the Sudan. From March 16 to April 18 it obtained about 2,500 pounds from direct local contributions. About 3,500 pounds were appropriated from the funds of the Palestine Committee, and 10,000 pounds came from Egyptian sources, making a total of about 16,000 pounds. It is this sum that supported 19,000 Sudan Railroad striking workers for more than four weeks and, except for the British strategy, the strike could have attained more serious proportions.

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